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Sira nostra patria: **The Catholic Community of Syros Between Empire and Nation-State.**

Syra, “the Pope’s island”, was the only island of the Archipelago with a solid Roman-catholic majority among its inhabitants. An imperial outpost with a large degree of autonomy for centuries, Syra also received protection from France in the long tradition of the “capitulations” between the French and the Ottoman Empire. As a neutral territory after the outbreak of the Greek revolution (1821), Syra would soon become a safe haven for Orthodox refugees fleeing the Ottoman reprisals. By 1825, its port had become a Christian “Eldorado” of legal trade and illegal traffic of all sorts, including piracy booties and slave labor. Albeit Greek speakers, island Catholics would call themselves and were referred as “Franks” or “Latins”. This hybrid identity, forged on this Levantine crossroads of the routes between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, was soon to be repressed. Despite their reluctance -or active resistance, the local Catholics would soon designate themselves as “Greeks of the Western Church“.

Considering the 1820s as an Arendtian gap, between what is not anymore, and what is not yet. we follow the threads that linked the island to the European turmoil. The persistence of prenational conceptions of homeland and the tensions between imperial supraterritorial and national/territorial conceptions of state sovereignty describe the conflict between revolution and counterrevolution, as well as but also the making of a new frontier between Europe and the Orient.

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